## **Redistricting Group Public Hearing Journal**

Wednesday, February 29, 2012 - 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.
Webber Community Center
4400 Dupont Avenue North
Minneapolis, Minnesota
612-370-4916

Redistricting Group Members Present: Clegg (Chair), Brown, Cohen, Cole, Connell, Dolan, Ferrara, Kozak, Lazarus, Peltola, Rubenstein, Sandberg, Schwarzkopf, Unni

- 1. Introduction and Orientation to Redistricting
- 2. Presentation of Draft Maps

Chair Clegg called the meeting to order at 5:06 p.m. He summarized the redistricting process and the format to be followed during the public hearing.

- 3. Acceptance of Public Testimony
- a) Barry Schade, 256 Sheridan Avenue South, Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association, stated that he essentially supported the proposed draft map which places the Bryn Mawr Neighborhood in Ward 7 and keeps Bryn Mawr intact as a community. The Bryn Mawr community wishes to maintain the integrity of the neighborhood, maintain their current boundaries, and remain in Ward 7. The Bryn Mawr Association passed a resolution stating that the neighborhood supports the arrangement as proposed by the Redistricting Group. There is, however, a discrepancy with the Park District line, which doesn't line up with the Ward boundary.
- b) Vida Ditter, 404 Thomas Avenue South, Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association, stated that the Bryn Mawr Neighborhood has always been in Park District 4. The Park District map proposed by the Redistricting Group places the Bryn Mawr neighborhood in both Park Districts 2 and 4. The Bryn Mawr Neighborhood is involved with the Basset Creek Master Plan and the Bryn Mawr Land Use Plan, and they asked that the Park District line be moved back to the neighborhood line because they have been working with the Harrison Neighborhood to restore Bassett Creek and find it very helpful to have two Park Commissions to address and to support them when they make requests. They had spoken with Park Commissioner Tabb who wholeheartedly agreed with their request.
- c) Vic Thorstenson, 522 3rd Avenue South, Citizens Committee for Fair Redistricting, stated that he had submitted a map to the Redistricting Group earlier in the process, and now was working with the Citizens Committee for Fair Redistricting. The Redistricting Group's proposed draft map was an improvement, but fell short in a number of areas, particularly in the number of majority minority districts that can be created in Minneapolis. The city has a total minority population of approximately 36%, so it would seem reasonable that the ratio of majority

minority wards should approach that number. His goal was to create 5 majority minority wards, and he presented a proposed map which he stated did that. There is a clear example of what he assumed was unintentional racial cracking in the Redistricting Group's proposed map. There is a sizable Black population in Elliot Park, Cedar Riverside, and Ventura Village, but the Redistricting Group's draft map takes about 2,500 Black residents in Elliot Park and puts them in a ward that is mostly White, and places a dense Black population in Cedar Riverside into a University of Minnesota ward. His proposed map took the minority population in Elliot Park, Cedar Riverside, Ventura Village, Midtown Phillips, and Phillips East and created a majority minority Ward 6. Ward 8 would also become a majority minority ward as would Wards 11, 5, and 4. His plan was created with a lower population deviation than the Redistricting Group's draft map staying within a 2% population deviation. He stated that the wards in his plan were compact, regularly shaped, and contained 8 total miles less boundary lines than the Redistricting Group's plan. The goal of his plan was to create 5 majority minority wards which is proportional to the minority population of the city.

**d) Jeremy Fink, 4324 Lyndale Avenue South**, stated that he appreciated that Mr. Thorstenson's map did not appear to split many neighborhoods between wards. He inquired if Mr. Thorstenson's plan created minority majority wards based on total population or on legal population. There are many residents in the areas highlighted by Mr. Thorstenson who are not yet citizens.

Thorstenson stated that his plan created five majority minority wards based on total population, and three majority minority wards based on voting age population (Wards 4, 5, and 6). The redistricting plan is a ten-year plan, and many residents will become citizens during that ten year period. The goal of his plan was to not split any neighborhood into more than two wards.

- e) Carol Pass, 2536 18th Avenue South, EPIC, stated that she was concerned that the traditions of people that are used to working together in a contiguous area be considered as well. In Phillips, they have worked together, and Mr. Thorstenson's map breaks up their working traditions. There seems to be several agendas moving around in the options. One thing she would like to have happen is if there is a somewhat unusual agenda that has been heavily lobbied for, it would be a good thing to have that out in the open to have a discussion about it in the neighborhood. The Native Americans in this area are trying to create a Native American cultural corridor. If Little Earth is split off from the rest of the Phillips area, it breaks apart their voting bloc. The American Indian group should be kept together. They have strength together. The level of gerrymandering is disturbing and unhelpful for neighborhoods to work on crime and housing. She was very concerned that Phillips remain a unit.
- f) Matthew Perrault, Ward 3, inquired if Mr. Thorstenson looked at other factors, such as communities of interest like the neighborhoods that form the artists' community near Lake Calhoun, in addition to the factors of population ethnicity and neighborhood.

Thorstenson stated that the pecking order started with the Voting Rights Act, as interpreted by the US Constitution, but he also considered other communities of interest in creating his proposed plan. Lake Calhoun is within five different neighborhood boundaries. The neighborhood boundaries and the census blocks don't always match up exactly.

g) Mike Dean, business address 2323 East Franklin, Common Cause Minnesota, stated that Mr. Thorstenson had indicated that the map brought forward by the Redistricting Group was essentially cracking the minority communities and inquired if Mr. Thorstenson thought that it might potentially violate the Voting Rights Act.

Thorstenson stated that the East African community it is a fairly defined, compact, contiguous, high density population that lives in Elliot Park, Cedar Riverside, and Phillips and if three wards trisect that community, that would appear to be cracking. Whether it met a legal standard, he wasn't sure.

- h) Hazel Reinhardt, 5116 Abercrombie Drive, stated that she had been engaged by the Citizens Committee for Fair Redistricting and spoke in support of the map presented by Mr. Thorstenson. Even though the City of Minneapolis did not change in overall population size, its characteristics did change in the last decade. It has a larger minority population and creating more minority majority districts is an important reflection of that change. In addition, the East African community has been in Minneapolis for some time, but it is coming of age and has more adult citizens eligible to vote. It is a compact community and it is a community which needs to be recognized. Even though the overall population of the city hasn't changed, the characteristics of the population have. She urged the Redistricting Group to reflect those changes.
- i) Mohamud Noor, 2955 Tyler Street Northeast, stated that the Redistricting Group's proposed map was actually dividing the communities of color, particularly the Cedar Riverside area. Members of the public have already expressed that this is considered cracking. Redistricting takes place only once every ten years. This is the right time to create minority wards and to give people who currently don't have a voice in the city an opportunity to have a voice and a voting bloc in the next election. The minority population is getting involved in the process on their own initiative and they are saying this is the time. Mr. Thorstenson presented a good map. The demographics are changing, the interest is there, and it is time to encourage minority involvement in the process.
- j) Jeremy Fink, 4324 Lyndale Avenue South, stated that right now the East Harriet Neighborhood is currently in Wards 10 and 13. The proposal would carve it into three wards. It is hard enough to organize things as a neighborhood when they have to go to two different Council Members, let alone going to three. It would not be hard to include East Harriet in all of Ward 13. As stated previously, it was hard to know if there were underlying agendas. The one section of East Harriet in Ward 13 is six blocks of very expensive homes. Lyndale Avenue is a physical boundary that divides the community and people tend to identify with the east or the west side of Lyndale, not both. The proposed map will make it more difficult for East Harriet, CARAG, Lynnhurst, Linden Hills, and other neighborhoods to work together with the Southwest Business Association on a series of neighborhood events that take place all year.
- k) Jeff Skrenes, 1500 22nd Avenue North, stated that he liked the fact that the proposed map kept North Minneapolis with a continuous boundary along the river. North Minneapolis is experiencing a revitalization on the riverfront and is getting attention both in terms of infrastructure and communication. He applauded the fact that they had continuous access to the river through the proposed map and emphasized that if maps get shifted around, it is very important for North Minneapolis residents to keep that access. The proposed map divides the North Loop into three wards, which he felt did a disservice to both to the North Loop and the Harrison Neighborhood, and suggested including the North Loop as part of the downtown area.
- I) Zachary Metoyer, 2848 Pleasant Avenue South, stated that there is always the question of whether is it right to draw boundaries based upon race, which he thought was debatable. But there are issues and things that people want to address as a group. The numbers in communities of African descent, which include the African American community, Liberian,

Nigerian, Somali, and many others in Minneapolis are growing, and they have issues where they need a voting bloc and the power of their voice. Voting is about the ability to work together and get behind a candidate that will address the issues that you need to have addressed so that your children can grow up in a community that is addressing those issues. It is not about race. But a lot of the issues that communities need to address are racially based, and that is a fact that cannot be avoided. When it comes down to who can address those issues best, it is those who are affected by those issues. If the majority of voters in a community are White and they elect a White candidate, that candidate's constituency is going to be White and the candidate will address White issues and the issues of the non-White population in the community will pretty much get put on the wayside. Of course, a White candidate can represent communities of color and address their issues, but it is up to the community to be able to make the choice of who they want to represent them. We need someone to represent areas, such as minority majority populated areas with high foreclosure rates that will address the issues and fight for the money that the city receives to address those issues.

- m) Benjamin Masters, 1814 Glenwood Avenue, Harrison Neighborhood, stated that he worked at Redeemer Center for Life, a non-profit in the Harrison Neighborhood whose mission is to be a beacon of hope and empower the dreams of their neighbors. He was representing a coworker who couldn't attend the hearing. The current redistricting splits the Harrison Neighborhood into Wards 5 and 7. The economic situation and other issues between residents of Wards 5 and 7 are dissimilar. He requested that all of Harrison Neighborhood stay in Ward 5 so they could organize as one racially rich community that seeks to do good work in Minneapolis.
- n) Larry Hiscock, 503 Irving Avenue North, Director and Lead Organizer with the Harrison Neighborhood Association, stated that a community-wide meeting was held with residents from both sides of the proposed divided community. The position that came from the residents at the meeting was that the Harrison Neighborhood should not be divided. It is a small neighborhood of 3,200 residents. Dividing the neighborhood would significantly dilute the voting power and the ability of the community to advocate for itself around issues that are important to it. The Harrison Neighborhood should remain in Ward 5 in order to have a fair opportunity to elect a representative of their choice. Federal Law requires that racial and language minorities have a fair opportunity to elect representatives of their choice. Harrison is 70% people of color with a median income of \$38,000. The community to their south is 86% White with a median income of \$64,000. Those residents moved into Ward 7 would be disenfranchise and have a difficult time achieving representation in the electoral process. In the proposed map, much of the business district in Harrison would be moved into Ward 7, much of that in areas receiving benefit and subsidy to public financing that are based upon Ward 5 demographics. unemployment rates, and a variety of disparities. The Redistricting Principles state that the Redistricting Group will keep communities of interest in one ward whenever possible and the Harrison Neighborhood requested that it remain in Ward 5. Mr. Hiscock presented the Redistricting Group with a map that the neighborhood association had drafted and also submitted via email.
- o) Abdul Warsame, 614 19th Avenue South, Lead Coordinator for Citizens Committee for Fair Redistricting, stated that the Committee felt that the Redistricting Group's proposed map unfairly divides the East African community and does not meet acceptable redistricting standards. The Citizens Committee has worked with Mr. Thorstenson to develop a plan that addresses their concerns and also addresses the fundamental principles of redistricting as set out by the Charter Commission. (1) Each ward should have nearly the same number of people. The principle should be one person, one vote. Allowing a 5% deviation is not appropriate. The

state map created by the Minnesota court had a deviation of only 1% - 2%. (2) The wards should reflect current communities of interest, not lines that were drawn decades ago. The Redistricting Group's proposed map has a cracking affect by splitting entire minority neighborhoods such as Cedar Riverside, Seward, and Elliot Park. (3) The ward lines should be logical and rational. They should not be drawn to protect incumbents. The court system recently paired over 20% of all incumbent state legislators. The Redistricting Group's proposed plan pairs no City Council members. This is an obvious flaw. (4) Minneapolis has a 40% minority population. The current City Council does not reflect that reality. The Redistricting Group will decide whether the city grants true apportionment for citizens. The Citizens Committee encouraged the Redistricting Group to take that into consideration in adopting a plan. (5) The Citizens Committee thanked the Redistricting Group for considering their input. They could see that the Redistricting Group tried to align part of the Cedar Riverside community with the Phillips community. However, the proposed plan still leaves out thousands of East Africans who live in Elliot Park, parts of Cedar Riverside, and the Seward neighborhood. The Citizens Committee's proposed map connects all of them. There are no valid reasons to keep Elliot Park in Ward 7. It pairs up the city's most urban and most affluent neighborhoods. The Citizens Committee hoped that the Redistricting Group would improve upon their proposed plan over the next few weeks and thanked the Redistricting Group for their hard work. (Written comments also submitted)

- p) Mohamed Jama, 1600 6th Street South, Cedar Riverside Neighborhood, Citizens Committee for Fair Redistricting, stated that the redistricting process is very important to the Cedar Riverside Neighborhood and the Redistricting Group's proposed map divides the Cedar Riverside and Seward communities. The community would like the 2,000 minorities in the Seward community added to Ward 6 as well as the Elliot Park community. This would give minorities a better opportunity to run for election. The new Ward 6 boundaries are crucial for the youth in the area because they are building the future of the city and want the opportunity to run for the City Council. Minneapolis has a 40% minority population, so the minority community should have 3 to 4 seats on the City Council.
- q) Hussein Ahmed, 1501 6th Street, Citizens Committee for Fair Redistricting, stated that only in America can people of all different backgrounds speak their mind based on democratic values and have their voices heard. The Redistricting Group's map has come a long way. However, the Citizens Committee would like to see Elliot Park, Cedar Riverside, and Seward included in Ward 6. These areas are being split between Wards 7 and 2. He hoped the Redistricting Group would address those issues
- r) Mariano Espinoza, 3120 12th Avenue South, stated that he represented some of the voices of the Latino community. Over the past two months they have held over ten community meetings to talk about the problems and challenges they face and to develop a plan which they had emailed to the Redistricting Group today. There is an opportunity to create the best communities possible in the future and the Latinos will be the biggest minority majority in Minneapolis in the next decade. It is an opportunity to work with elected officials and with their brothers and sisters from other minorities to put together the best plan. For the first time they have the opportunity to make sure that people are elected that reflect the community they represent. It is important to the Latino community to think about the next steps to make sure that Latinos are elected to the City Council. It is important to work with everyone in the community and empower everyone together. (Submitted proposed map)
- s) Jeffrey L. Strand, 5100 Thomas Avenue North, stated that he wanted to reiterate the importance of neighborhood boundaries as communities of interest and seconded the

comments of Mr. Skrenes, Ms. Pass, and Mr. Hiscock. The city performs its business through the neighborhoods and neighborhoods perform core municipal functions. He requested that the Redistricting Group consider those neighborhood boundaries.

- t) Dan Dittmann, 3729 Snelling Avenue, stated that he also had concerns about the Cedar Riverside neighborhood, particularly the small portion at the top of Ward 6 on the proposed map which is a three-block area that encompasses 3,800 people, many of which are part of the Somali community. Dividing that area from the rest of Cedar Riverside would weaken the ability of the Somali community to organize and get a voice to speak their interests at the City Council level. Also, he would like the block-level data released for all future maps so that anyone could easily reproduce a proposed map.
- u) Steven Pundt, 456 Newton Avenue South, Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association, stated that he was pleased that all of the Bryn Mawr neighborhood was kept within Ward 7. The neighborhood association is proud of their relationship with their council member. To keep their neighborhood strong and livable it is best to have one council member that serves the entire neighborhood. He hoped that as the Redistricting Group responded to request from other constituents but that Bryn Mawr would be retained in its entirety in Ward 7.
- v) Osman Dagane, 12125 95th, stated through an interpreter that he was an executive member of Public Affairs for the Taxi Cab Drivers Association. More members of the Taxi Cab Drivers Association would have been present if not for time constraints and the weather. This is a newly-formed association that will cover many areas including the airport and the downtown area. Their main goal is to have the City of Minneapolis be one of the top cities in taxi service with a well-managed Taxi Cab Association. He also supported the position of the Citizens Committee for Fair Redistricting.
- 4. Close of Public Hearing
- 5. Announcements and Adjournment

The Redistricting Group remained available to hear comments until 7:00 pm. There were no additional speakers after 6:25 p.m.

The next public hearing will be held on Wednesday, March 1, 2012, at Hosmer Library, 347 East 36th Street from 5 - 7 pm.

Peggy Menshek Redistricting Group Coordinator